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CLAIMS

1. A method of installing a gaiter (10) around a joint defined between joint members the method comprising providing a range of gaiters (10) for use with a range of joints of different dimensions, the range of joints being greater than the range of gaiters and at least some of the gaiters (10) in the said gaiter range being stretchable to fit two or more joints of the said joint range so the said joint range can be accommodated by the range of gaiters wherein a gaiter (10) is selected from the gaiter range to fit a particular joint.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein each joint is defined between first and second members and each gaiter (10) of the said range of gaiters comprises a flexible tubular body having first and second end portions (12,14) and a central portion (26) therebetween the said end portions (12,14) being configured for secure attachment to respective first and second joint members.

3. A method according to any preceding claim in which each gaiter (10) incorporates a central portion (26) having folds (28) therein to permit axial extension of the gaiter body (10).

4. A method according to any preceding claim in which each end portion (12,14) of at least one gaiter (10) of the said gaiter range incorporates a respective single annular fitting section or channel (16,18).

5. A method according to any preceding claim in which the gaiter range

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includes at least one gaiter (10) having a plurality of seating channels (32) at one or each end portion (12,14).

6. A method according to any preceding claim in which at least one gaiter (10) of the gaiter range is dimensioned to fit exactly, without any substantial stretching of the gaiter (10), one or more of the range of joints whilst also being stretchable to fit other joints in the joint range.

7. A method according to any preceding claim in which the wall of said at least one gaiter (10) is configured and dimensioned to provide the requisite stretch characteristics for a given range of joint member dimensions.

8. A method according to any preceding claim in which the wall of said at least one gaiter (10) has, throughout, a maximum thickness of approximately 3mm.

9. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said at least one gaiter (10) has stretch characteristics to accommodate the process of fitting the gaiter (10).

10. A method according to any preceding claim in which the wall thickness of one or more gaiters (10) in the gaiter range is approximately 2mm.

11. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said at least one gaiter (10) may be formed from a synthetic rubber compound formulated to provide a minimum stretch of 550% at break.

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12. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said at least one gaiter (10) has stretch characteristics to accommodate prolonged installation in position about a joint.

5 13. A method according to any preceding claim in which one or both end portions (12,14) of the said at least one gaiter (10) are permanently stretchable to a diameter which is 115% of the respective (unstretched) end portion diameter, wherein the stretching of the gaiter (10) results in no more than a 10% change in the properties of the gaiter rubber.

10 14. A method according to any preceding claim in which at least some of the gaeters (10) in the said gaiter range are formed from a synthetic rubber compound which is formulated so that the gaiter is also compressible to fit two or more joints of the joint range.

15 15. A method according to any preceding claim in which one or both end portions (12,14) of the said at least one gaiter (10) (of the gaiter range) are radially compressible.

16. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said one or both end portions (12,14) are radially compressible to a compressed diameter which is 98% of the (uncompressed) respective end portion diameter.

20 17. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said one or both end portions (12,14) are radially compressible, such that the compressed end portion and, in particular, the pertaining fitting section

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retains a substantially circular cross-section.

18. A method according to any preceding claim in which the or each gaiter (10) of the range is stretchable in all directions, and is at least stretchable longitudinally and transversely (relative to the longitudinal axis of the gaiter).

19. A method according to any preceding claim in which the said end portions (12,14) of one or more gaiters (10) of the gaiter range incorporate one or more internal and/or external ribs or beads (20,22) which extend wholly or partially around the circumference of a respective end portion (12,14) of the said one or more gaiters.

20. A method according to any preceding claim in which the wall thickness of the gaiters (10) in the gaiter range is constant.

21. A method according to any preceding claim in which one or more gaiters (10) of the range incorporate a gaiter wall which varies in thickness to alter the flexing characteristics of the respective gaiter(s).

22. A method of installing a gaiter (10) substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

23. A gaiter (10) suitable for use in the method of any preceding claim, wherein the gaiter is stretchable to fit two or more joints of a joint range.

24. A gaiter (10) substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

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